

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of separating metal particulates from a slurry of consisting essentially of liquid reducing metal₁ and metal particulates₁ and salt particulates, the method comprising the steps of:

filtering the slurry to form a filter cake of metal and salt particulates ~~with some~~, wherein the filter cake further includes a residual amount of liquid reducing metal₁;

breaking the filter cake into pieces having average diameters of less than about five centimeters; and

removing at least a portion of the residual liquid reducing metal from the broken filter cake₁; and thereafter separating the metal and salt particulates.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the liquid reducing metal is removed from the broken cake by vacuum distillation.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the liquid reducing metal is removed from the broken cake with a hot sweep gas.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the hot sweep gas is an inert gas.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the inert gas is argon.

6. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the hot sweep gas is at positive pressure.

7. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the hot argon sweep gas is at positive pressure.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the liquid reducing metal is present in the filter cake in an amount that is ~~up to~~ less than about ten times the weight of the metal particulates.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the liquid reducing metal is an alkali metal or an alkaline earth metal or mixtures thereof.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the liquid reducing metal is Na or Mg.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the metal particulates are Ti or a Ti alloy.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the salt particulates are a at least one halide.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~1~~ 13, wherein the ~~salt particulates~~ at least one halide ~~are~~ is a chloride.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the metal particulates are Ti or a Ti alloy and the salt is ~~Na or Mg chloride~~ NaCl or MgCl₂.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 15, wherein the liquid reducing metal is Na and the salt particulates are NaCl.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the cake is broken into pieces having average diameters up to about two centimeters.

19. (Currently Amended) A method of separating metal particulates from a slurry consisting essentially of liquid metal, and metal particulates, and salt particulates, the method comprising the steps of:

filtering the slurry to form a filter cake of metal and salt particulates ~~with some,~~ wherein the filter cake further includes a residual amount of liquid reducing metal;

breaking the filter cake into pieces having average diameters of less than about five centimeters; and

removing at least a portion of the liquid reducing metal from the broken filter cake;

separating the metal and salt particulates; and

sizing the metal particulates ~~before~~ prior to water washing the metal particulates with water to prevent unacceptable explosions of the metal particulates upon ~~contact~~ contacting the metal particulates with water.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 19, wherein the liquid reducing metal is removed from the broken filter cake by vacuum distillation or by a hot sweep gas.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the hot sweep gas is argon.

22. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the hot sweep gas is at positive pressure.

23. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein the hot argon sweep gas is at positive pressure.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20, wherein the liquid reducing metal is Na or Mg and is present in the filter cake ~~up to~~ in an amount less than about ten times the weight of the metal particulates.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the metal particulates are Ti or a Ti alloy.

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~26~~ 19, wherein the filter cake is broken into pieces having average diameters ~~up to~~ less than about two centimeters.